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EDITORIAL

Challenging Ideas

As we come to the end of our first year of publishing three issues of *The New Bioethics*, one of the many benefits of an extra issue has been to see the spectrum of authors increase. This one for example contains papers from both an undergraduate student and two professors. Though ranging in topic across the whole lifespan from gamete to corpse, all of the papers in this edition challenge existing paradigms. Three of these relate specifically to the beginning of life.

Watson challenges the widely accepted practice of reproductive surrogacy whether commercial or altruistic, arguing that the practice undermines the human dignity of both the surrogate mother and her child. Foster also makes use of the concept of human dignity and what he calls ‘four lenses manufactured by [it]’ to challenge the status of the UK abortion law and suggests furthermore that only this dignity-based approach is compatible with Article 8 of the European Convention of Human Rights. Saadik challenges a widely held view of abortion — namely that it is no different ethically from contraception in that both interrupt the continuous process of the creation of a new person. He questions two premises on which this view rests and proposes rather that there is a clear moral boundary ‘on the basis that an embryo is something greater and other than the sum of its constituent gametes’.

Westin challenges the idea of a diagnosis in mental health by examining the language used in such diagnoses and how they relate to the self-concept being defined. In order to minimise the associated stigma in psychiatric diagnoses, she argues the need to move towards ‘a goal-directed diagnosis aiming at a healthy and empowered integration of the whole individual’.

Two prominent professors also debate challenges to religious — especially Christian — perspectives on both the living and the dead. David Albert Jones contends that the phrase ‘sanctity of life’ as currently used in arguing against intentional killing of the innocent is a twentieth century invention and the term should be quietly dropped as it is unhelpful in countering ‘quality of life’ arguments. David Gareth Jones, in a fascinating exploration of post-mortem plastination of the human body, considers whether the process devalues the body or not and what challenges it poses for Christian understandings of death and bodily resurrection.

Trevor Stammers
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